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112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Wisconsin National Guard

Alaska Governor visits National Guard disaster exercise

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Alaska Governor Sean Parnell visited the Palmer Fairgrounds yesterday, 50 years after the Great Alaska earthquake of 1964, to view the Alaska National Guard Medical Detachment, the Alaska Department of Health, and other organizations providing medical aid to more than 75 injured role-players during Exercises Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard - Alaska 2014.

"It is so important because in a disaster—just like in life—it is about people; and when these teams are working well together, more people are saved; more people can recover faster, and communities can too," Parnell said.

Local volunteers attended the event playing the role of injured civilians to test the response capabilities of the organizations working together.

"I think the civilians coming in will be really proud to see us working together because they can see their National Guard isn't just a part of the Army, it is a part of its citizens," said Staff Sgt. Michele Weinheimer, a medic with the Medical Detachment.

The medical detachment's mission is to work closely with civilian agencies and be ready to provide medical assistance to citizens after a natural disaster.

The medical team and local agencies were able to set up their field hospital and begin processing patients within a 12-hour period. Surgeons, nurses and counselors were on hand to provide aid to the multitude of injuries introduced to them, closely relating to natural disaster scenarios.

"That is what we need in the time of disaster—great coordination, communication and great partners—and we have them," said Parnell.

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Photo cutlines follow

Photo cutlines

140328-Z-OB094-074

Tahlia Gerger, 9, of Juneau, Alaska, reads her script prior to playing an injured citizen seeking assistance from the Alaska National Guard Medical Team field hospital at the Palmer Fairgrounds during Exercise Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard - Alaska 2014, March 28. Vigilant Guard is an exercise conducted to ensure the state of Alaska and the nation is prepared and ready to respond to catastrophic events. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Kimberly Chouinard/ Released)

140328-Z-OB094-306

Staff Sgt. Michele Weinheimer, a medic with the Alaska National Guard Medical Detachment inprocesses an injured role-playing civilian at the Palmer Fairgrounds during Exercise Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard - Alaska 2014, March 28. Vigilant Guard is an exercise conducted to ensure the state of Alaska and the nation is prepared and ready to respond to catastrophic events. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Kimberly Chouinard/ Released)

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Sean Parnell, Governor of Alaska, visits the Palmer Fairgrounds 50 years after the Great Alaska earthquake of 1964 to observe the Alaska National Guard Medical Detachment and the Alaska Department of Health and other organizations providing medical aid to more than 75 injured citizens during Exercise Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard - Alaska 2014, March 28. Vigilant Guard is an exercise conducted to ensure the state of Alaska and the nation is prepared and ready to respond to catastrophic events. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Kimberly Chouinard/ Released)

140328-Z-OB094-198

A nurse with the Samaritan Purse non-profit organization comforts a 12-year-old girl role-playing as an injured civilian at the Palmer Fair Grounds during Exercise Alaska Shield and Vigilant Guard - Alaska 2014, March 28. Vigilant Guard is an exercise conducted to ensure the state of Alaska and the nation is prepared and ready to respond to catastrophic events. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Kimberly Chouinard/Released)